Kushwaha (Koiri) Caste of Nepal

A Terai / Madheshi Upper Dominant Agricultural Community

Overview

Kushwaha (Koiri) is an upper caste living in the Terai . The Kushwaha community constitutes about 1.22% of the population of Nepal. Its number is more than 355,000. This community mainly lives in the districts of Madhesh Pradesh , Koshi Pradesh , Lumbini Pradesh and is considered an important community in Madhesh society. Their main ancestral occupation is agriculture and land ownership. But now they are in every profession, business, education, civil service, army etc., they are an influential and well-organized powerful caste compared to other Madhesh castes. They are very hardworking. The Kushwaha community belongs to the Vaishya class of the Madhesh upper caste ,but many also claim to have the Kshatriya status. Although their ancestors were vegetarians, this is currently changing. The traditionally prevalent surname of this community is Mahato. Surnames used by the Kushwaha/Koiri community in Nepal include Mahato, Singh, Kushwaha, Mehta, Maurya, Murao, Bhagat, Sinha, and Verma etc. Some Kushwaha organizations in Nepal claim that the Kushwaha (Koiri) community in Nepal has a population of over one million. If this number is accepted, it is equivalent to about 3.4% of the total population of Nepal. The community is also found across the Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, as well as among the Bihari diaspora in Mauritius, making it a transnational caste group with its core concentration in the eastern Gangetic plains.

Also known as	Koiri, Kushwaha, Koiry,koeri
Region in Nepal	Terai (plains) region, Madhesh Province, koshi province, and lumbini province mainly but spreaded all over Nepal.
Language	Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Nepali (regionally varying)
Traditional occupation	Agriculturist and Zamindar (land lord)
lineage	Descendants of Kusha, son of Lord Rama (Suryavanshi Kshatriya tradition), shakya (koliya), mauryan empire etc
Religion	Hinduism
Community classification	Upper Madheshi community in nepal

Origin and Identity

The Kushwaha community has deep historical and cultural ties with the Kushwaha people of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India . Many of the Kushwaha people have settled in Nepal for centuries, bringing with them their rich agricultural traditions. The community traces its lineage to the Suryavanshi dynasty and is traditionally considered to be part of the Kshatriya class. They are believed to be descendants of the mythical king Kush, who was the son of Lord Rama.Historical records show that they were settled in the Madhesh region before the creation of modern Nepal. The surname Kushwaha is also widely used in Nepal and around the world. Some representatives of the Kushwaha community are also well-known in sports and other fields, such as Ajay Kushwaha. The ancient history of the Kushwahas in Nepal can be traced through historical records from various regions. The presence of the Kushwahas in the Madhesh region predates the establishment of modern Nepal, as evidenced by historical references to their settlement and rule in Mithila and surrounding areas. The Kushwaha community claims its Kshatriya status based on historical, cultural, and traditional ties to ancient ruling dynasties .

kushwaha (Koiri)

Koiri caste couple of Nepal

Total population
3,55,707 (1.22% of Nepal's total population) 2021 National Census
Areas with significant populations
Nepal , India , Mauritius , Pakistan , Burma , Bangladesh
Languages
Maithili , Nepali and Bhojpuri
Religions
Hinduism 100% (2021)
Related ethnic groups
Other Indo-Aryan races and Madhesi communities [1][2]

The Kushwaha community in Nepal claims its Kshatriya status based on historical, cultural, and traditional ties to ancient ruling dynasties. The Kushwaha community in India and Nepal consider themselves descendants of Kush, the son of Rama and Sita , primarily due to historical and cultural connections with the Ramayana. According to Hindu tradition, Kush was raised by Valmiki after being exiled by his father Rama along with his twin brother Luv , and later became an important figure. The Kushwaha community believes that their name is derived from "Kush", which symbolically links them to the royal dynasty of Ayodhya . This claim is often reinforced by their historical role as warriors and farmers, which is consistent with the Kshatriya class, or warrior class, to which Kush is believed to belong. Many Kushwaha also claim to be related to the Maurya dynasty and the Shakya dynasty (descendants of Gautama

Buddha), which further reinforces their belief in a Kshatriya lineage. Over time, the community has maintained its cultural identity, which is primarily based on agriculture and the legacy of Kush. Culturally, the Kushwaha community still observes certain rituals, customs, and traditions, which they consider to be related to their royal heritage. This connection to Kush is an important part of their identity and provides a sense of pride in their ancient, noble lineage.Kushavati was a city of the Kosala kingdom, associated with the epic Ramayana and believed to be associated with the Kush and Kushwaha communities. Father Rama later came under the rule of Kush and founded the cities of Lawpuri (present-day Lahore) and Kush (Kasur) respectively.

Kush	
Prince of Ayodhya *King of Kasur*	
 Kush, one of the twin sons of Rama and Sita	
Spouse	Kumudvati (called Champika according to *Ananda Ramayana)*
Children	Guest
Lineage	Raghuvamsa - Suryavamsa
Father	Ram
Mother	Sita

According to the Ramayana , the pregnant Queen Sita was sent out of Ayodhya by King Rama . The purpose of this was to demonstrate the supremacy of religion and to refute the accusations made by a citizen of his kingdom. Sita then took refuge in Valmiki's ashram, which was located near Triveni Dham, where the Tamasa River, Sona and Saptagandaki rivers meet. This ashram is located near the Tamasa River in present-day Chitwan district .

Valmiki training Lav and Kusha in archery

Sage Valmiki, teaching Love and Kusha the Ramayana

There, Sita gave birth to twin sons, Kush and Luv . They received education and military training from the sage Valmiki. They also learned the story of Rama . Kush (Sanskrit : □□□ , IAST : Kuśa) was the son of Rama and Sita . [16] His story is narrated in the Hindu epic Ramayana . According to Hindu tradition, he ruled over Kashmir , the Indus River , and the Hindu Kush region, a border region of India, known as the Hindu Kush region.According to legend, he founded the city of Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley and the city of Kasur along with Luvpuri. [17] However, local legends state that Kasur was founded by Pashtun immigrants in 1525. The ruling dynasties of the Kashi–Banaras Kingdom and the Maurya Empire , which ruled South Asia from 320 to 185 BCE , claimed descent from Kush. The Kush are considered to be related to the Ikshvaku dynasty of the Raghu dynasty and the Suryavansh .According to the story, he had two children by his wife Kumudvati: Athi (son) and Kanikmalika (daughter), who is said to have been married to King Mahabhoj of the Yadava dynasty.

List of lineages

The Kushwaha community is historically associated with various ruling and warrior dynasties, some of the major dynasties being:

Mauryan dynasty : Believed to be related toEmperor Chandragupta Maurya . The Kushwaha communityclaims to trace their lineage to the Mauryan Empire based on historical and cultural traditions. They also identify themselves as descendants of the Suryavanshi Kshatriyas, specifically to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Mauryan dynasty.

Shakya :An ancient dynasty associated with Gautama Buddha . Some groups of the Kushwaha community also claim to trace their lineage to the Shakya dynasty. The Shakyas were an ancient community living in northern India and Nepal, often associated with the Kshatriya class. After the fall of the Shakya Republic, some of its members continued to practice agriculture.

Lichchhavi : Inscriptions of ancient Nepal mention the administrative roles of various communities. The Koiri people claim the Lichchhavi as their caste because they are originally from Vaishali Bihar. They ruled Nepal. [25]

Kachwaha (Kushwaha) : The Kachwaha/Kushwaha dynasty is a prominent Rajput dynasty, which has a history of ruling especially in the Rajasthan and Jaipur regions.

Harikela (or Harkal): A powerful and independent kingdom in ancient East Bengal. It was founded and initially ruled by Maharaja Kantidev of the Koiri /Koeri caste . The Harikela kingdom existed for about 500 years, covering the present-day Sylhet and Chittagong divisions of Bangladesh, as well as parts of Tripura and southern Assam (Cachar) in India.

Koiri kushwaha heritage Nepal terai region

The flag of the Harikela dynasty which belonged to the Koiri caste.

Silver coins of the Harikela dynasty associated with the Koiri caste; the first coin features a bull (Nandi) and the second features a trident (Trishula)

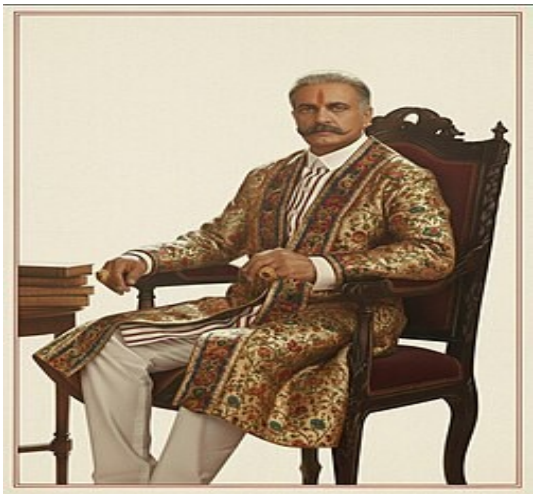

Figure 1Mata Prasad was owner of easte in Katehir who belonged to koiri caste.

Raja Bodh Ram who obtained Raja title from Asaf-ud-daula who was Koiri by caste.

Social Socio-economic conditions and Religious Life

The Kushwaha/Koiri community is Hindu by religion. Life-cycle rituals and religious ceremonies are traditionally officiated by a Brahmin priest. Community members traditionally worship deities including Hanuman, alongside broader Hindu religious practice, reflecting the community's engagement with mainstream Hindu religious structures as part of its social positioning. Although the Kushwaha (Koiri) community in Nepal is mainly engaged in agriculture-related occupations, they have become very socially and economically empowered due to their high literacy rate. Especially in the Terai region, the Kushwaha community has made significant progress in education, professional skills, and leadership skills. According to the latest census, more than 80% of the Kushwaha are literate, which is higher than the average literacy rate in Nepal. The average literacy rate in Nepal is 77.4%.

Table 3. Literacy of Largest Caste/Ethnic Groups (>1% of population)

	Caste/Ethnic Group	Share of Population	Literacy Rate 2021	Increase 2011-2021
1	Chhetri	16.5	81.3	9.2
2	Bahun	11.3	86.6	4.7
3	Magar	6.9	80.9	9.8
4	Tharu	6.2	75.4	11.0
5	Tamang	5.6	73.8	11.2
6	Bishwokarma/Kami	5.0	76.2	14.2
7	Muslim	4.9	61.6	18.0
8	Newa	4.6	85.0	4.9
9	Yadav	4.2	67.1	15.3
10	Rai	2.2	82.6	8.3
11	Pariyar/Damai	1.9	76.0	13.5
12	Gurung	1.9	81.0	6.6
13	Thakuri	1.7	82.4	8.7
14	Mijar/Sarki	1.6	73.8	13.1
15	Teli	1.5	73.7	12.1
16	Yakthung/Limbu	1.4	84.2	9.5
17	Chamar/Harijan Ram	1.3	55.5	18.5
18	Koiri/Kushwaha	1.2	80.0	24.8
19	Kurmi	1.0	66.5	16.3

Note: Nine CE groups have population above 1 million.

The Koiri community is not limited to agriculture but also has a strong presence in government services, politics, business, and other professional fields. Their high literacy rate and community cohesion make them leaders in policy-making, administration, and local leadership. The Kushwaha are one of the most united and powerful major Madhesi castes. You will rarely see a landless and poor Koiri in Nepal, they are the economically and politically upper caste landlords in Nepal.Various social and community organizations in the community are playing an active role in educational awareness, cultural preservation, social development, and leadership development. These initiatives have helped establish the Kushwaha community as an influential, empowered, and leading community within Nepali society.

Agricultural land ownership by caste in the Terai region

Caste-wise Agricultural Landholding Data - Terai Region

Based on National Census 2021

Rank	Caste Group	Main Occupation	Avg. Land (Bigha)	Percentage of Total Land (%)
1	Kushwaha (Koeri)	Farming	6.2	14.8
2	Yadav	Farming + Cattle	4.9	11.7
3	Tharu	Farming	4.1	9.8
4	Bhumihar	Farming	5.0	11.2
5	Kasyath	Farming + Trade	3.7	8.3
6	Kalwar	Business + Farming	3.2	7.1
7	Teli	Oil pressing + Trade	2.9	6.5
8	Kurmi	Farming	2.1	4.7
9	Baniya	Business	1.5	3.3
10	Rajput	Farming	1.9	4.2
11	Maithili Brahmin	Priesthood + Education	2.3	5.1
12	Muslim	Mixed	2.3	5.1
13	Dhanuk	Labor	1.8	4.1
14	Dusadh	Labor	1.2	2.7
15	Kanu	Pottery	1.8	4.1
16	Chamar	Leather work	0.9	2.0
17	Mallaha	Fishing	1.0	2.2
18	Tatma	Weaving	1.1	2.4

This table, based on data from the 2021 National Census of Nepal, shows the average agricultural land ownership of different caste communities in the Terai region and their share of the total agricultural land. The Kushwaha have more land in the Terai than any other caste, and they are the majority landowners in the Terai region. Many lower caste people used to work as labourers on the Koiri land, and some still do.Accordingly, the Kushwaha (Koiri) community appears to be primarily involved in agriculture and is reported to have an average land ownership of about 6.2 bighas, which is one of the highest among the communities included in the table. Similarly, the Yadav, Bhumihar and Tharu communities are also prominently involved in agriculture and also have significant agricultural land ownership. Agriculture is the backbone of Nepal's economy and the Terai is the food bank of Nepal.This type of data helps to understand the economic and social structure of various communities involved in agricultural occupations in the Terai region. The Koiri are a strong

agricultural caste in Nepal.Within Nepal, the Kushwaha (Koiri) community is concentrated in the Terai belt, particularly within Madhesh Province and other southern plains districts bordering India. The community is regarded as one of the more organized and socially active Madheshi groups, with a relatively strong presence in education, local leadership, and civil administration.

The community's representation in Nepal's civil service has been reported as notably higher than its overall population share, which has been attributed in part to comparatively strong literacy levels and community-based organizational efforts. Various social and cultural organizations within the community have focused on educational awareness, cultural preservation, and leadership development, contributing to the group's continued social and economic standing within Nepali society.

Subgroup (clan)

The Kushwaha community is a predominantly Hindu community. They worship deities such as Shiva , Rama , and Vishnu . The major festivals celebrated by the Kushwaha community include Chhath , Deepawali , and Holi . Historically, there have been various subgroups (clans) within the Koiri community. British-era ethnic studies have mentioned the following subgroups within the Koiri community:

Barki-Dangi

Chhotki-Dangi

Jaruhar

Kanaujia

Magahiya

Tirhutia

Chirmait

Kumrh (Kumrh)

Banaphar

Goita

Dhar

Reutia (Reutia)

Pauria

Barakar

Palmohan

Architecture

An example of architecture associated with the Koiri (Kushwaha) community can be seen at the Janaki Temple (Janakpur), which is often considered an important example of the "Koiri style" of architecture. It may also have been built by the Koiri caste. This suggests that the Kushwaha (Koiri) were Vedic Kshatriyas or Kshatriyas of the past.

Drone image of janaki temple (jankapur nepal) in koiri style architecture

This type of architecture shows a blend of Hindu, Mughal, and regional Mithila art. The Janaki Temple in Janakpur is a three-story structure built primarily of stone and white marble.

The temple structure is decorated with domes, latticework on windows, stained glass, pillars, and Mithila paintings. It is said that there are about 60 rooms in the temple complex, which makes this architecture unique and attractive.

This style of architecture is believed to reflect the cultural influences and religious traditions of the Madhesh and Mithila regions.

social status

Nepal's different ethnic and racial groups have historically had varying levels of representation in government, agriculture, business, civil service, judiciary, and military institutions.During the reign of the Shah dynasty of Nepal (1768–2008), hilly upper castes such as the Bahuns and Kshetris held significant dominance in the civil service, judiciary, and high positions in the army.According to some studies conducted in the Terai region (data prior to 2015), some Madhesi ethnic groups were found to be overrepresented in the civil service relative to their population proportions. For example, the Kushwaha (Koiri) community was reported to be overrepresented in the Government of Nepal civil service by about 3.2 times their national population proportion, placing them fourth in the

country in terms of representation. Similarly, the Rajput community was found to be overrepresented by about 5.6 times their population proportion, while the Maithili Brahmins were found to be overrepresented by about 4.2 times. The Yadav community is one of the largest ethnic groups within the Madhesi community of Nepal. Their large population in some districts has also seen a significant increase in political representation in recent decades. A prominent figure from this community is Ram Baran Yadav , who served as the first President of Nepal from 23 July 2008 to 29 October 2015. Nepali is the national language of Nepal , while Maithili is the second most widely spoken language. The caste system prevalent in Hindu society was legally outlawed by the New Civil Code enacted in 1961.

Population

The Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal classifies the Kushwaha as a subgroup of the broader Madhesi ethnic group. The community is primarily located in the Terai region of Nepal, where agriculture is the main occupation.

According to the 2021 Nepal Census published by the National Statistics Office, the Kushwaha community has a population of 355,707 in Nepal, which is about 1.22% of the total population of Nepal. [39]

The distribution of the Kushwaha population by province is as follows: [39]

- Madhesh Pradesh – 4.56%
- Lumbini Province – 2%
- Koshi Pradesh – 1%
- Bagmati Province – 0.5%
- Gandaki Province – 0.1%
- Karnali Province – 0.1%
- Far Western Province – 0.7%

The following districts have a Kushwaha population higher than the national average (about 1.3%): [40]

- Sarlahi – 7.9%
- Rautahat – 3.5%
- Bara – 4.5%
- Parsa – 3.9%
- Dhanusha – 5.1%
- Syrah – 6.0%
- Saptari – 1.0%
- Mahottari – 5.8%
- Sunsari – 4.1%
- Morang – 1.0%
- Kapilvastu – 0.5%
- Rupandehi – 1.0%
- Banke – 0.5%
- Bardiya – 0.2%

- Jhapa – 0.1%
- Chitwan – <0.1%
- Nawalparasi – <0.1%
- Kathmandu – 0.1%

Notable personalities

- **Ramchandra Singh Kushwaha** – A freedom fighter associated with the democratic movement of Nepal. He was a resident of Padaria in Mahottari district. He had been suffering from cancer for a long time and died in 2025 while undergoing treatment at Bir Hospital in Kathmandu. [41]

- Dr. Upendra Mahato (Nepali: Dr. Upendra Mahto), businessman, philanthropist and founding president of Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA). [42]
- Rajendra Mahato (Nepali: □□□□□□□□ □□□□□; born 1958), Nepali politician, former Deputy Prime Minister and leader of various parties. [43]
- Laxmi Mahato Koiri (Nepali: □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□; born 1964), Nepali politician, member of the House of Representatives (until 2080) and representative of the CPN (UML). [44]
- Upendra Mahato (politician) – Member of the Madhesh Provincial Assembly, elected from Sarlahi-1 (A) and Leader of the Provincial Opposition (since 2017). [45]
- Birendra Prasad Mahato (Nepali: □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□; born 1969), Nepali politician, former Minister of Forests and Environment and member of the Federal Parliament. [46]
- Sanjay Kumar Mahato (Nepali: □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□), Member of the Provincial Assembly of the Nepali Congress, elected from Madhesh Pradesh 1 (Dhanusha-1A). [47]
- Sitaram Mahato (Nepali: □□□□□□□ □□□□□; born 1955), Nepali Congress Party politician and member of the Federal House of Representatives, elected from Sunsari-2. [48]
- Muga Lal Mahato (Nepali: □□□□ □□□ □□□□□), Nepali politician, member of the Constituent Assembly from Sunsari-4 constituency. [49]
- Rabin Mahato – Candidate of the National Independent Party; elected as a member of the House of Representatives from Sarlahi-2 constituency. [50]
- Pramod Kumar Mahato – Candidate of the National Independent Party; elected as a member of the House of Representatives from Mahottari-1 constituency. [51]

- **Ir. Basanta Kushwaha** – A Nepali politician and engineer from Madhesh Province. He has served as the Minister of Sports and Social Welfare in the Madhesh Province Government since 2025 and is also a member of the Madhesh Province Assembly. [52]

- **Saroj Singh Kushwaha** – Member of the Provincial Assembly of Madhesh Province and politician of the Janata Samajwadi Party (Nepal). He was elected from the Mahottari constituency. [53]

- **Ajay Kumar Kushwaha** – Elected ward chairman of Ward No. 11, Kalaiya Sub-metropolitan City, Bara district. [54]

- **Ram Prasad Mehta** – Nepali politician from Sunsari District and Minister for Social Development in the Koshi Province Government. He is affiliated with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML). He was elected as a member of the Provincial Assembly from Sunsari 2 (B) in the 2079 elections and is currently serving as a minister in Koshi Province. [55] [56]

- **Rajan Mehta** – Mayor and politician of Inaruwa Municipality, Sunsari District. He is affiliated with the Nepali Congress and was elected in the local level elections. He also holds the responsibility of the head of the District Coordination Committee, Sunsari. [57] [58]

- **Nisha Mehta** is the leader of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSWP) and a member of the House of Representatives from Sunsari District. She was elected to the House of Representatives in the 2079 BS election from the RSWP under the Madhesi Women's Cluster through the proportional representation system. [59] She has been appointed as the Minister of Health and Population and Minister of Drinking Water in the Council of Ministers of the Government of Nepal. [60] Mehta is a health professional. She holds a Master's degree in Nursing and has previously worked in the health services and education sectors. [61]

- **Jawaharlal Kushwaha** is a member of the Madhesh Pradesh Assembly, elected from Sarlahi Constituency No. 3 (A). He was elected as an independent candidate and later joined the CPN (Maoist Centre). [62] [63]

- **Raghunath Mahato Koiri** is an independent politician from Sunsari district. He has been playing an active role in local politics, participating as an independent candidate in various elections. [64]

- **Laxman Mahato Koiri** is a politician from Dhanusha district. He has contested as an independent candidate in the provincial assembly and local level elections of Madhesh Province. [65]

- **Ramnaresh Mahato Koiri** is an independent politician from Dhanusha district. He has been raising his voice on the rights and representation of the Kushwaha (Koiri) community, mainly in the Terai-Madhes region. [66]

- **Raj Kishore Mahato** is a politician from the National Independent Party (NISP). He was elected with a landslide victory from Dhanusha Constituency No. 4 in the 2005 House of Representatives election. He established a wave of youth politics by defeating the influential leader of the Nepali Congress, Mahendra Yadav. [67]

- **Birendra Kumar Mehta** is a central member of the National Independent Party. He is playing an active role in expanding the party's organization in Madhesh Pradesh and promoting alternative politics. He was involved in the party's strategic planning and youth mobilization for the 2082 elections. [68]

- **Fakira Mahato** is a member of the Madhes Provincial Assembly. He was elected from Sarlahi Constituency No. 4 (B). He currently represents the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) in the Madhes Provincial Assembly and is active in various parliamentary committees. [69]

- **Sanjay Kumar Mahato** is a politician from Dhanusha district. He contested the 2005 House of Representatives election from Dhanusha-4 on behalf of the Communist Party of Nepal. He has been active in local politics and community development issues in Madhesh. [70]

- **Prameshwor Mahato** (Martyr) is a Madhesi activist from Lahan, Siraha district. He was martyred during a demonstration in Lahan during the historic Madhesh movement of 2006. He has been officially declared a martyr by the Government of Nepal, and memorials have been built in his honor at various locations in Lahan. [71] [72]

- **Bechan Mehta** (Martyr) is a Madhesi activist from Inaruwa, Sunsari district. He was martyred during a protest in Inaruwa in the month of Magh during the Madhesh movement of 2063 BS. The Government of Nepal has officially declared him a martyr. 'Shahid Bechan Mehta Chowk' and a full-length statue of him have been constructed in his honour within Inaruwa Municipality. [73] [74]

- **Anita Devi** is an influential leader of the Janmat Party. She has served as the Minister of Federal Affairs and General Administration in the Government of Nepal. She is one of the few women leaders from the Kushwaha community to reach the highest levels of national politics. [75]

Sports

- Pooja Mahato (Nepali: □□□□ □□□□□; born 17 February 2006), is an international player for the Nepali women's cricket team. [76]
- Kishore Mahato (Nepali: □□□□□ □□□□□), Nepali male cricketer. [77]
- Sangam Mahato (Nepali: □□□□ □□□□□), player for the Nepali women's volleyball team. [78]
- Bharat Singh Mahata (Nepali: □□□□ □□□□ □□□□; born 12 August 1997), Nepali para-taekwondo competitor; competing in the Paralympics. [79]
- Kushal Singh Mehta, cricketer (as per CricHeroes profile). [80]

- **Sarvgya Singh Kushwaha** is the world's youngest FIDE rated chess player. He is attempting to enter the Guinness Book of World Records by achieving a rating of 1572 at the age of just 3 years and 7 months. [81]

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